

between Betty and Sally, felt suddenly self-conscious and uncomfortable.

"Isn't it glorious to have actually got off!" she said as breezily as she could. The remark fell a little flat.

Kingsway was telling Aunt Mary that it was wise to go to bed and get warm if she felt bad, and her sisters were exploring boxes of chocolates. Alberta felt a little hurt that she was left out of this treat, for she liked chocolates. She was sure that he did not approve of the expedition, and of her as the author of it. She was vexed with herself for caring whether he was pleased or not. It was nothing but a stupid family habit. As far back as Alberta could remember, he had been almost like an elder brother to them all, and they had looked for his support or disapproval of all their childish adventures. Kingsway had been a great favourite of the father who died when Alberta was only fourteen, and the children had been used to regard him more as their father's contemporary than theirs. When he came back to Craven Bridge, invalided from the Service, and with ample leisure to mind his neighbours' business, he showed himself still more than willing to arrogate to himself the privileged position of guide, philosopher, and friend to the fatherless, motherless troop of young chums who made him a welcome comrade.

Alberta felt vaguely annoyed at his manner over this project—it seemed to suggest that they had no right to act independently of his opinion. He clearly disapproved. He said little, but she felt that he was implying a good deal. His name of "Captain," which they had used much as one calls a large protecting